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SUBJECT: CHAD: CONTINUED HIGH FRENCH ENGAGEMENT IS KEY TO CHAD'S STABILITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S GOALS IN CHAD AND FOR THE DARFUR EXODUS

REF: KHARTOUM 1538

PARIS 00001936 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young, 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

¶1. (C) Deputy Presidential Diplomatic Advisor Bruno Joubert told U.S. Ambassador to Chad Louis Nigro on October 20 that 2009 could be a "pivotal year" in Chad's history. Joubert said that French priorities in Chad centered on (a) electoral reform to achieve credible elections in Chad in 2009 and 2011 for the first time in its history; (b) a reinforced MINURCAT PKO to succeed EUFOR/MINURCAT in 2009; and (c) effective management of Chad's oil revenues, which could provide some boost to the economy and finance institutional and administrative reform. The overarching French goal was to help the Chadians build a functioning state that controlled and governed all its territory, something that had been missing in Chad since independence. Joubert agreed with Ambassador Nigro's overall assessment that certain positive factors were in place, notably the August 13 accord, the Dakar process, and the new, serious-minded Chadian government, but that the many problems Chad faced, including especially Darfur, caused Chad to have to "restart from zero" repeatedly. Nonetheless, France remained highly engaged, in part to avoid the resulting vacuum in the region should Chad slide into dysfunction or succumb to the Sudan-backed rebels.

Joubert noted Libya's ambiguous role, at times favoring Sudan but now seeming to support Chad, at least since the February 2008 near-fall of the Deby regime. On the ICC and Sudan, Joubert said that recent indications that Sudan was taking steps to prosecute janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb did not represent the "radical change" in policy France had been seeking in order for France even to consider changing its position on the ICC issue.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT CONT'D: We would agree with Joubert that the political and financial capital France has invested in Chad far outweigh actual French interests in Chad itself. In our view, they are making this investment to help form a stable Chad better able to resist destabilizing forces from the north and east that could threaten other French regional interests and draw France into even more onerous commitments in Chad and elsewhere. EUFOR and MINURCAT I are success stories for France in Chad and the region. Absent a continued French willingness to invest politically and diplomatically in Chad, the future of MINURCAT II, of the international community's ability to assist refugees and IDPs in Chad, and of Chad's stability -- indeed of its viability as a state -- would be in serious jeopardy. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

CHAD: "RESTARTING FROM ZERO"

¶3. (C) Ambassador to Chad Nigro met on October 20 with Bruno Joubert, President Sarkozy's Deputy Diplomatic Advisor and chief advisor on Africa. Ambassador Nigro gave a brief overview, noting the threat the rebels continued to pose and the way that circumstances forced Chad to "restart from zero" on a periodic basis. Still, there were some positive signs -- the August 13 accord was still operative, the new Chadian government seemed serious and was working purposefully, and the Dakar process, thought imperfect, offered opportunities. Joubert agreed with this assessment, noting that Chad was in "perpetual reconstruction." The current national government never seemed to reach escape velocity, leading to an "every man for himself" approach. Social services, such as education, were eroding, along with the administration of Chad's territory. Joubert recalled that an older Jesuit cousin of his had spent much of his life working and teaching in Chad. There were fewer and fewer people like that working in Chad now, he regretted. It was necessary to get Chad out of this kind of rut. The discovery of oil a few years ago created some optimism and for a while Deby seemed poised to move the country forward. The many problems emanating from Darfur had put an end to those hopes more recently, and Chad and Sudan were constantly blaming each other for supporting each other's rebels.

2009 "PIVOTAL"

¶4. (C) Joubert said that 2009 could be a "pivotal year" in Chad's history. Joubert, again with a tone of regret, said that "we the French are prisoners of Chad" -- with few real interests on the ground there but many responsibilities. Because, "if we left tomorrow, we know there would be all kinds of difficult problems" that would rush to fill the

PARIS 00001936 002.2 OF 003

vacuum. The international community had to remain engaged and present, in part to prevent the region's many problems from mushrooming out of control in the absence of a stable Chadian state. Joubert said that France's priorities for Chad were: (a) electoral reform to achieve credible elections in Chad in 2009 and 2011 for the first time in its history; (b) a reinforced MINURCAT PKO to succeed EUFOR/MINURCAT in 2009; and (c) effective management of Chad's oil revenues, which could provide some boost to the economy and finance institutional and administrative reform. The overarching French goal was to help the Chadians build a functioning state that controlled and governed all its territory, something that had been missing in Chad since independence.

¶5. (C) Concerning the 2009 elections, which were rapidly approaching, Joubert noted that Chad was entering into a crucial period. He said the GOF was continuing to push all parties, including the rebels, to engage in the elections process, consistent with the August 13 agreement. The goal would be successful elections that produced a "credible political life" in Chad. Joubert expressed resentment at Sudan's repeated request that France "get Deby to stop the backing the JEM" rebel group. Joubert said the French had told the Sudanese that France could pass messages but did not rule in Chad and was neither willing nor able to guarantee that N'Djamena would rein in the JEM, as Sudan seemed to be suggesting. Joubert doubted that the Deby regime had as much influence over the JEM as Sudan assumed.

EUFOR, MINURCAT, MINURCAT II

¶6. (C) Joubert noted EUFOR/MINURCAT's success (a point with which Ambassador Nigro firmly agreed) and their stabilizing influence. In Joubert's view, there should be no question about the need for another mission to succeed EUFOR/MINURCAT. However, he said that such a mission should feature more UN PKO police and gendarmes, especially Formed Police/Gendarmerie Units, and fewer military troops. The

presence of troops bothered Sudan and what the region needed could better be provided by organized gendarmes rather than soldiers. Ambassador Nigro noted MINURCAT's broad mandate, with its emphasis on human rights, prison reform, territorial administration, and not simply its training of Chadian police and gendarmes to protect refugees and humanitarians. Joubert said that Deby had visibly warmed to the presence of international forces in Chad. Earlier, he seemed to prefer that France ensure his regime's security. He had, however, come to accept and even welcome EUFOR and even more warmly, MINURCAT. Joubert thought that Deby would be ready for the next step, i.e., a reinforced MINURCAT to replace the EU (which had replaced France). All of this would happen in 2009 as well, Joubert noted.

¶7. (C) Joubert and Ambassador Nigro agreed that U.S.-French cooperation on Chad had been beneficial to Chadian stability and political process. They agreed as well on the key role that EU resources and expertise were playing in the August 13 electoral reform process. Joubert stressed that France welcomed U.S. engagement in Chad and spoke approvingly of his ability to work well with USG officials responsible for Africa. Ambassador Nigro noted the increased role in Chad that Nigeria seemed ready to play and commented on the professionalism of its diplomats. Joubert said that Saudi Arabia's interest in Chad was growing as well. Joubert acknowledged the difficulty in tracking and understanding Libya's role in the region. Libya sometimes favored Chad, sometimes Sudan. Since the February 2008 fighting, Libya seemed to have tilted toward Chad, but whether it would continue to do so was difficult to determine.

SUDAN/ICC

¶8. (C) SUDAN/ICC: Asked about the possible implications of Sudan's taking legal action against ICC indictee and janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb (reftel), Joubert reminded that France, including President Sarkozy, had consistently insisted that Sudan make "radical changes" to its policies in order to hope that France and others would even consider some sort of ICC relief. Sudan had to show progress in several broad areas: (1) peace in Darfur (including genuine progress on political reconciliation with rebel groups), (2) cessation of hostilities with Chad and support for Chadian rebels, (3) cooperation with UNAMID, and (4) cooperation with the ICC. On this latter point, Joubert noted that Sudan had acted (or had said it would do so) against Kushayb but had not done anything about Haroun. Moreover, whatever action Sudan took

PARIS 00001936 003.2 OF 003

with respect to Kushayb had to have ICC approval for it to mean anything. Joubert said "we are still waiting" for Sudanese action on all areas of concern, indicating that Sudan's move to take action against Kushayb, in and of itself, would not amount to anything significant in French eyes.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) We agree with Joubert that the French are indeed in a sense "prisoners of Chad" in that there is a significant gap between concrete French interests inside Chad and the amount of political and financial capital they are willing to invest there to maintain the country's (and the region's) stability. We think the French see a stable Chad as a bulwark against disintegrative forces emanating from the north and east that could endanger more concrete French interests in the region and involve France in onerous future military and other commitments in Chad and elsewhere. We see the success of EUFOR and of MINURCAT as major triumphs for French policy in Chad and the region. Without France's willingness to keep investing politically and diplomatically in Chad, the future of MINURCAT II, of the international community's ability to assist refugees and IDPs in Chad, and of Chad's stability -- indeed of its viability as a state -- would be in serious jeopardy. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Ambassador Nigro has cleared this message.

¶11. (U) TRIPOLI MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

STAPLETON